

# Spring Classis Report



Ron VB leading a session at the annual Coach Gathering in January, 2025

## Greetings Deacons and Churches!

Our work is not possible without the continued support of Christian Reformed deacons and churches. Your financial contributions through Diaconal Ministry Shares, as well as your extra offerings and prayers, help us continue to offer support and relevant training.

This past fall and winter was FULL of trainings, workshops, Classis presentations, one-on-one consultations, and more!

These are the ways we continue to connect with deacons and help them live out their mandate to transform communities with Christ's love.

Here are some updates we'd love to share with you at this time:

## National Director Set to Retire in Fall 2025

Yes! You heard us right. Ron Vanden Brink, our current National Director since 2017, is set to retire this coming November. Our Board of Directors has already commissioned a search team and they are hard at work, combing through resumés and setting up interviews as we type this newsletter.

Please join us as we pray for this process!

## Our Mission

*Relying on the Holy Spirit, we exist to Inspire, Empower, and Equip Deacons as they animate congregations to join in God's transforming work in communities across Canada.*

## Our 2025 NewGround Campaign has begun!

**Churches received their campaign materials\* in early March.**

The NewGround program of Diaconal Ministries Canada (formerly called Operation Manna) has been walking with Canadian CRC churches for over 50 years, empowering them to reflect God's love through practical, Christ-centered outreach. And with NewGround's help, churches are walking alongside the people right in their own communities, bringing justice, mercy, and hope.

Through the annual NewGround offering, CRC churches can walk with both!

Over the years, NewGround has supported youth centres, children's camps and after-school programs, counseling agencies, community dinners, food security programs, and more. **Your generous gifts will help NewGround help even more churches in 2025!**

*\*Whether your church holds an offering for NewGround or not, we ask you to distribute our brochures to your congregation!*



Get more  
resources  
here!

WATCH THE CAMPAIGN VIDEO NOW



## Building into our Diaconal Coach Network

**Our Diaconal Coaches receive ongoing training and equipping!**

This past January, our coaches and staff spent 2 1/2 days at Mt. Mary's Retreat Centre in Ancaster, ON. The agenda was full but we also ensured that there was time for discussion, given that we are in a very dynamic time with the CRC. This year's training theme was on having a more asset-based approach in our ministries, not solely focusing on needs and gaps.

Each year we enjoy a site visit, typically a past or present NewGround Partner. This year we headed to Good News Fellowship CRC in London, ON. Their *More Food, Less Hunger* program is addressing food insecurity. This church is highly engaged in their local community! We also heard from Community Counselling London, a former NewGround partner, that rents space from the church.

The weekend also included times of prayer and worship, as well as a catered dinner combined with a meaningful celebration of the Lord's Supper.



COACHES MARG & GARY



AT GOOD NEWS CHURCH



WORKSHOP TIME!



# STOP Handing out Gift Cards!!

## Did we get your attention?



*Have your deacons helped someone going through a financial difficulty? Have you helped them more than once? What did you know about their situation before you helped? Did you wonder if they took advantage of you? Did you wonder if you could've done something more... or something different?*

**IF YOU'VE WRESTLED WITH 'HOW' TO DO BENEVOLENCE IN YOUR CHURCH, YOU ARE NOT ALONE!** Often when deacons help individuals or families more than once, they don't have a clear understanding of the entire situation and, therefore, how to appropriately respond. Deacons will often 'react' by addressing the immediate need (eg. paying a bill, giving a grocery gift card) and hope for the best.

In some cases this could be the correct response; sometimes someone just needs help that one time. But in other situations, this same response might only superficially address the real underlying root causes. Even worse, it could contribute to greater dependency, with the church playing an enabling role rather than an empowering one.

Our **"Helping Without Harming in Church Benevolence" Workshop** has become one of our most popular trainings. **Since September, ~132 deacons and ministry leaders have taken this workshop!** In it, we show deacons how they can move away from offering short-term help (aka 'relief') and be better prepared to walk alongside individuals or households, bringing positive and long lasting changes to their lives (aka 'rehabilitation' and 'development').

It continues to be our our honour and privilege to support and equip deacons and churches like yours. May God bless you in your ongoing ministry!

Respectfully submitted,

**ron vanden brink**

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## The Moving Forward in Faith Conference is Moving Forward for 2025!!

*Were you able to attend this inaugural event last November?*

*Plans for the 2025 event are underway so stay tuned for details as they become available!*



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MINISTRIES  
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